

# **ЧИЙЗБУРГЕР, ЧИЙЗБЎРГЕР OR ЧИЙЗБЎРГЕР? ON STRESS AGAIN AND ITS REPRESENTATION IN DICTIONARIES**

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In this paper the author investigates the production of stress in the English N+N borrowing *чийзбургер* 'cheeseburger' in Bulgarian by two groups of speakers: Bulgarian learners of English and Bulgarian speakers with no knowledge of English. The experiment consisted of two tests: first a production, and then a perception one (a judgement task), with five trained phoneticians taking part in the latter. Part of a bigger ongoing study, the research was inspired by the various representations of the word *чийзбургер* 'cheeseburger' with different stress patterns in the examined dictionaries.

**Keywords:** stress production in Bulgarian, English borrowings, phonetic adaptation, N+N constructions

## **Introduction**

Languages change constantly in all their aspects. Some changes take more time than others but change is an imminent, natural and necessary process. Contact between languages is inevitable, and more often than not due to it they enrich their vocabulary stock – that is one of the most productive types of language change that occurs. There is a variety of possibilities as to how new words enter the lexicon of a given language, but this paper will specifically look at the process of borrowing lexical items from one language into another, and more precisely at an English borrowing of the type N+N in Bulgarian, its phonetic adaptation in the receptor language in terms of stress, the representation of the latter in dictionaries, and its actual usage by Bulgarian speakers.

When it comes to borrowing words from another language, there are periods of heavy, not-so-heavy, and light borrowing, and that is not only from one source. In addition to that, new lexemes are being borrowed in various fields (e.g., sports, science, food and drinks, fashion, communication and technology, to name but a few), depending on the needs of the receptor language. Whenever a word is borrowed into a language, however, it has to undergo a process of

adaptation. There are a few types of adaptation that take place, namely graphic, phonetic, morphological, semantic, and syntactic (БЛФ/BLF 2013: 189). Phonetic adaptation entails adapting the borrowed word to the specific features of the receptor language (БЛФ/BLF 2013: 314), which usually involves transliteration and transcription (Зидарова/Zidarova 2011: 47), with the latter being the preferred option in recent years. Another important process that accompanies the aforementioned two concerns the stress pattern of the specific word, and it is called “accentual adaptation” (Пацева/Patseva 2016: 135). It involves either preserving the original stress pattern of the borrowed word, or altering it to comply with the phonetic and phonological rules of the receptor language. Stress is one of the problematic areas for learners and speakers of any language – be it their native language or a foreign one, thus the correct use of prominence patterns by language users has been the basis of a great deal of research and is a relevant area of study to this day (Kunter/Кунтер 2011, Пацева/Patseva 2017, Duběda/Дубеда 2018). That is why the author of the present paper is particularly interested in the adaptation of stress of English borrowings in Bulgarian. This paper will focus on the word “чийз-буреп”, and the way it is presented as an entry in various dictionaries.

According to *Grammar of the Contemporary Bulgarian Language Vol. 2 Morphology* (ГБСКЕ/GBSKE 1993: 97 – 98) the stress patterns of Bulgarian compound words can be of the type:

- having one primary stress,
- having one primary and one (or more) secondary stress(es),
- and having two primary stresses, where there is no distinction between primary and secondary stress.

The case of English compounds is slightly different. For constructions of the type N+N Roach (Roach/Роуч 2009: 85) gives a rather concise and straightforward definition – the compound has either one primary stress usually on the first element, or one primary and one secondary stress. Of course, there are exceptions to the rule, shown in an extensive study by Kunter (Kunter/Кунтер 2011), in which he shows that primary stress on the second element in a N+N

compound is a viable option too, yet, it is an exception and applies to specific groups of words.

When it comes to borrowed words and their stress patterns, however, literature on the matter does not provide hard and fast rules and remains rather vague. Boyadzhiev et al. in *Grammar of the Contemporary Bulgarian Language Vol. 1. Phonetics* (ГБСКЕ/GBSKE 1998: 212) claim that: “It is a basic rule in the Bulgarian language that in the pronunciation of borrowed words the stress pattern remains the same as the one in the original pronunciation of the word from the source language. However, there is a widespread phenomenon of nativisation of those borrowed words, i.e. their pronunciation is being adjusted following the characteristic phonetic and stress patterns in the Bulgarian language.” In short, what this passage claims is that some borrowings (regardless of the source language) undergo accentual adaptation, while others do not. Yet, it is rather unclear how speakers know and decide which word would remain with its original stress pattern. The pronunciation of English borrowings in general is challenging enough for Bulgarian speakers (Зидарова/Zidarova 2011: 47), and often times so are their meaning and spelling (РНДБЕ/RNDBE 2010: 5). One possible solution to the stress problem at hand would be to turn to dictionaries for examples instead of to grammar books for vague rules. When I did that, however, the results were confusing, because in three of the consulted dictionaries there were three different stress patterns present. It has to be noted that the authors of the dictionaries (with the exception of one contributor to two of them) were different and they were issued in various years – the oldest being from the year 2000 and the newest from 2012. The shown stress patterns of “чийзбургер” were the following:

чийзбўргер	РЧДБЕ 2000
чийзбургер	РНДЗБЕ 2001
чийзбўргер	ОПРБЕ 2012

The original stress pattern of the English word *cheeseburger* is with primary stress falling on the antepenultimate syllable, and secondary

stress falling on the penultimate syllable. From the table shown above it is obvious that the English borrowing in Bulgarian violates the aforementioned basic rule from the very moment it is noted to have entered the Bulgarian language. The primary stress in the earliest dictionary entry falls on the penultimate syllable, i.e. the place where there is a secondary stress in the original pronunciation. Moreover, just one year later we see a different stress pattern shown in the new dictionary, this time with primary stress on the antepenultimate syllable. This is closer to the source language pronunciation, yet still not the same because it contains only one stress. The last cited dictionary entry was taken from the Official Spelling Dictionary of the Bulgarian Language, which apart from spelling, also shows stress patterns. In the dictionary there is a preliminary note (ОПРБЕ/OPRBE 2012: 141) stating that the authors do not distinguish between primary and secondary stress, thus words containing two stresses are represented with two primary stresses. According to both *vol. 1 Phonetics* and *vol. 2 Morphology of the Grammar of the Contemporary Bulgarian Language*, the Bulgarian language recognizes both primary and secondary stress. English distinguishes between the two as well, so in theory there should be no difficulties in the accentual adaptation of borrowings containing both levels of stress in the original pronunciation. Practice, however, begs to differ.

The example above shows an exception to the basic rule of accentual adaptation of borrowings into Bulgarian, but it is not an exception itself because it is one of many such cases. However, it is still not clear how the word should be, or moreover, how it is actually pronounced by native Bulgarian speakers in 2019. This discrepancy in terms of the representation of stress patterns in dictionaries, and the language reality inspired the current research and raised a number of questions such as why there is no unified stress pattern in official and reliable sources, such as dictionaries; which dictionary to trust; and what the actual language reality is i.e. how Bulgarian speakers do actually pronounce the borrowing “чийзбургр”, and also what stress patterns they use when they produce the original English N+N constructions.

### **Materials and Methods**

The experiment consisted of a production and a perception task (the judgement task). For the production task I had manually collected a corpus of 25 English compound words, their 25 borrowed Bulgarian equivalents, and 25 Bulgarian N+N compounds with a “traditional Bulgarian stress pattern”. By traditional it is meant having two primary stresses on both elements. For the selection process I have complied with a number of criteria, which will be elaborated on down below, and as my primary sources I have used seven dictionaries – five Bulgarian and two English ones, as well as two Bulgarian grammar books. The first and foremost criterion was the type of compound. For the task at hand, I have specifically chosen to work with N+N constructions. Another factor that influenced my choice of corpus items was the different representation of the stress pattern of one and the same lexical item in the different Bulgarian dictionaries. During the selection process, I encountered a variety of those stress patterns and that further piqued my interest in the topic. That is why I selected specific borrowed words and then matched them with their English counterparts. In its final version the corpus consisted of 25 two-, three- and four-syllable English words with their original English stress patterns, of another 25 words – their borrowed counterparts into Bulgarian, and a final set of 25 Bulgarian compounds with a traditional stress pattern. The final set of Bulgarian words had a dual purpose – it served as a distractor set, as well as it also tested prominence placement of the native stress pattern on the side of the speakers.

The production task went as follows: the selected words were inserted into carrier sentences of the type “He repeated ‘word’.” The researched item from the corpus was put in sentence final position on purpose because of the rule of end-weight stress, according to which prosodically heavier constituents occupy the end position of an utterance. Also, it was enclosed with inverted commas, which was another indicator that the speakers should pronounce it in a more careful manner, and not as if reading a list. The carrier sentences in Bulgarian were of the type “Той повтори ‘дума’.” The carrier sentences in both languages had the same number of syllables and the same rhythm. The sentences were shown one by one on slides in separate PowerPoint

presentations, and every sentence was displayed on a different slide. Every respondent had the chance to change the slides at their own pace and discretion. They could also go back to a slide, if they felt they needed to repeat the whole sentence in a clearer manner. The PowerPoint presentations were three, each containing 25 sentences.

I chose to compare the production of two groups of speakers, each containing 20 respondents. The first group (hereafter called G1) consisted of 20 young Bulgarians who have studied and know English – (11 girls and 9 boys), and the latter – (hereafter called G2) consisted of 20 middle-aged Bulgarians who have not studied and do not know English (10 women and 10 men). Both groups had the same presentations, yet there were six variants of the order of the sentences in those, and six possibilities of the order of the presentations. The approach of having different order of the sentences and different order of the presentations was undertaken so that there would be no order bias of any type on the side of the respondents. Since G1 members know English, they had to read out all three presentations one after another, with each respondent starting with a different order from the respondent before them. Thus, I could analyse their production of both the original English compound and its native stress pattern along with their pronunciation of its borrowed equivalent in Bulgarian, as well as their production of the stress patterns of traditional Bulgarian words. G2 read out only two of the presentations, namely the one containing only borrowings and the other consisting of traditional Bulgarian words.

The recordings were made in a quiet room at Sofia University, Sofia, (for G1) and in a quiet room in Pazardzhik (for G2) in the course of three days due to participant, room, and equipment availability. The software used was Praat, and a stand-alone microphone (Samson Go Mic portable USB studio condenser). I also used a laptop – LENOVO Ideapad 320 for the recordings, and a tablet – Samsung Galaxy Tab A 2019. The tablet was necessary so that the speakers could change the slides of the presentations at their own pace. The option to use another laptop was rejected outright because of the profusion of background noise it would emit. Speakers from G1 had to produce the sentences from the “extra” presentation with the English sentences, so that I could investigate whether their knowledge of English has influenced in some

way their production of the stress pattern of the respective borrowings, and the production of the traditional Bulgarian words.

The productions of all participants (both G1 and G2) were the basis for a perceptual judgement experiment carried out by two trained English phoneticians from Sofia University. Both of them are Bulgarian native speakers highly proficient in English. The phoneticians listened to each utterance as many times as they considered necessary, and determined the prominent syllable(s) of the word. Whenever they were not able to identify the stress pattern, or were hesitant, they marked that item with a question mark. After all the utterances were listened to, a process of data comparison took place. Every item that the listeners were hesitant about or where there was a difference in agreement regarding the prominence of the words in question, was noted down and a list of such items was created. The whole recordings of the respective speakers that contained those “hesitant items” were sent to another expert panel, this time consisting of 3 other trained phoneticians. The number of the sent files from both groups was 24. It has to be noted that it was the whole files that were sent to the experts, so that any bias on their side would be avoided, had just cut out sections from the recordings been sent.

For the lack of space and due to the narrow scope of the present paper, however, in the results section I will focus my attention on and present the data regarding the stress pattern of only one of the researched borrowed words from the corpus, namely “чийзбургер”. The data were analyzed auditorily by noting the different stress patterns all speakers had produced and then these were turned into simple percentages. Since the word „чийзбургер“ has three syllables, the possible productions of the stress patterns are 4 in number – primary stress on the ultimate ( $\sigma \sigma' \sigma$ ), on the penultimate ( $\sigma' \sigma \sigma$ ), on the antepenultimate ( $'\sigma \sigma \sigma$ ), and both on the penultimate and antepenultimate syllable ( $'\sigma' \sigma \sigma$ ). A production of all syllables stressed, or of the ultimate and the antepenultimate stressed is unnatural. The participants in the experiment had neither declared nor indicated language and speech deficiencies, and no one of them produced the word with three stresses. That is why I exclude those as possible variants and do not further discuss them. The full analysis and further investigation of the stress patterns of the whole corpus of

words – the words in English, the English borrowings, and the traditional Bulgarian words, will be the focus of my PhD dissertation, which is due in 2020.

## **Results**

First, I analyzed the productions of the respondents from G1, who have knowledge of English, in the extra production task – i.e. production of English stress in English words. Attention was paid to what stress pattern they use and which syllable they make the most prominent. The percentage of female participants who had produced the compound “cheeseburger” with only one initial primary stress ( $'\sigma\sigma\sigma$ ) is 90.9 %, with 9.1 % having produced it with two stresses – on the penultimate and the antepenultimate syllable ( $'\sigma'\sigma\sigma$ ). In contrast, male G1 participants exhibited 100 % initial stress production. Taking those results together, it is seen that there is a 95 % tendency on the side of the respondents from G1 to place English stress incorrectly and produce the compound with initial stress only.

With regard to the task that was the same for both groups, namely the production of stress patterns in borrowed compounds into Bulgarian, 100 % of the female respondents from G1 had produced „чийзбургер“ with initial stress ( $'\sigma\sigma\sigma$ ). The same applies to the male respondents from the same group – again 100 %. When their results are combined together, it can be seen that G1 exhibits 100 % tendency to produce “чийзбургер” with initial stress only.

Female respondents from G2 varied significantly, however. Only 50 % of them produced the word with initial stress ( $'\sigma\sigma\sigma$ ), 40 % had stress on both the antepenultimate and the penultimate syllable ( $'\sigma'\sigma\sigma$ ), and 10 % stressed only the penultimate syllable ( $\sigma'\sigma\sigma$ ). 70 % of the male speakers from the same group showed preference for initial stress, while the rest 30 % had produced two stresses – on the antepenult and the penultimate syllable ( $'\sigma'\sigma\sigma$ ). Taking their scores together, it can be noted that G2 respondents in total had a 60 % tendency in favour of initial stress. When the results of both groups are compared, it can be seen that they both tend to have a preference for and to produce the word in question with initial stress only – 100 % for G1 and 60 % for G2.

	' σ σ σ	' σ ' σ σ	σ ' σ σ
G1	100%	0%	0%
G2	60%	35%	5%

### Discussion and conclusions

The research reported here was designed to answer the questions how Bulgarians pronounce the borrowing “чийзбургер”, and whether dictionaries are a reliable source when it comes to representing the stress patterns of borrowings of the type N+N, represented in them. Moreover, I have taken steps in the direction of investigating whether Bulgarian learners of English acquire English stress in compounds correctly.

Concerning the first question, the results from the present small-scale experiment suggest that Bulgarian speakers, regardless of their knowledge of English as a second language, tend to produce the word „чийзбургер“ not with its original native English stress pattern. Even though some G2 speakers showed some variation by putting stress on both the antepenult and the penult syllable, the majority of the group favoured initial stress placement. Overall, G1 respondents were more consistent, showing 100 % favour for initial stress only.

As to the second question, I do not have a solid answer but can propose a few speculations. It seems that the authors of the different Bulgarian dictionaries have not followed or applied the same principles/criteria, especially when it comes to representing the stress patterns of those borrowed words. Also, it seems they offer a personal view on how the words are pronounced, thus they do not truthfully represent the reality in terms of actual language usage in the country. As any person who relies on dictionaries and considers them a reliable source, I find such discrepancy in representation unacceptable. What is more, it also indicates a big niche for further research and improvement.

With regard to the third question, the results from the comparison of learner productions from G1 of the English word “cheeseburger” suggest that respondents have difficulty in acquiring English compound stress. However, no bold claims should be made regarding

the whole system of English compounds because the current claim is only valid when it comes to the word in question.

In a nutshell, the results from this particular study are inconclusive because the analysis was done regarding only one lexeme. A definite conclusion to make, however, is that dictionaries need to be more precise in indicating stress patterns and should be updated more often, taking account of and representing in a truthful manner the pronunciation of Bulgarian native speakers. A suggestion on how to represent the actual picture is by taking polls with a large number of speakers and giving their preference for a stress pattern as a reference point. Having said all of this, work on the stress of borrowings of the N+N construction type is necessary, thus ongoing, and will be shown in a number of future studies.

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